

Support from the Neighborhood

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Inbox

To: Steger, Nathaniel (POL)

Dear Sergeant Steger,

My husband and I met you and your wife while out to dinner in the Dogpatch neighborhood a few weeks ago. It was such a real and rare pleasure for us "civilians" to have a chance to meet and talk with an officer of the SFPD outside of some official setting- or the usual chaotic situation where police assistance is called upon. Having lived in The Mission nearly 20 years and involving myself daily in community-based nonprofits and neighborhood safety and quality of life improvement efforts, it was also wonderfully inspiring to discuss these ideas with a police professional who is clearly passionate about The Mission as a community- and is so personally invested in forging solutions and relationships with the people who live here.

We are both aware of how violent crime, drug abuse and homeless encampments have escalated in The Mission over the past several years. My immediate neighborhood at 15th and Guerrero is witnessing the worst crime wave in twenty years. Violent muggings, burglary, - even attempted kidnappings in the middle of the day are a fact of life for my neighbors- many of whom are elderly.

It was with great sadness that we learned of the shooting last week at the homeless encampment on Shotwell and 19th Street. We read stories in Mission Local where homeless campers state frankly that "everyone living on the street is armed" simply because they feel unsafe. Which is exactly why homeless encampments cannot be allowed to exist on the streets of San Francisco. As Supervisor Wiener notes, The City is not doing the homeless any favors by allowing them to live on the street and creating a social dynamic that increasingly puts the lives of private citizens, police officers and the homeless in dangerous and unmanageable situations.

While I did not witness the event, not for one moment do I believe that you acted with more force than was necessary in the situation last week that led to the shooting death of Mr Gongora. I also wish to recognize that you have suffered a trauma with this event and its aftermath- and I extend my hope for your spiritual and professional recovery.

My husband and I, along with our neighbors, are deeply grateful that you made the choice so many years ago to devote your many gifts to police work. Your intelligence and good will literally shines like a beacon. We look forward to knowing you better and continuing to share ideas on how to make The Mission a great place for everyone to live and visit.

I hope you do not mind that I am copying Police Chief Suhr, and Mission District Captain Perea, as well as Supervisor Wiener on this email. I feel strongly that the citizens of San Francisco who are closest to the problems we face together and are actually invested in solutions support one another. It is the right thing to do.

Thank you again for your service.

All the best,